

Tribalism in Afghanistan

The Cultural Geography of Afghanistan

The terror attacks on September 11, 2001 set in motion the direct involvement of American troops in Afghanistan. In the prelude leading to Operation Enduring Freedom, many examined the history of Afghanistan, specifically the Soviet-Afghan War, and reached the conclusion that the United States would ultimately meet the same fate as the Soviets. While OEF has been successful thus far in dislodging the Taliban and denying Al Qaida safe haven, the war torn nation of Afghanistan has yet to be stabilized. Also recall that the Soviets were also initially successful before encountering a dedicated resistance in the Mujahadeen. The critical task the US must accomplish in order to prevent history from repeating itself is ensure the support of the Afghan people. One thing that US military personnel can do to minimize the cultural differences between the Afghan people and US military personnel is to learn about the people living there to include their values and beliefs. Successfully doing so will reduce the possibility of misunderstanding and miscommunication and make the presence of American personnel on their soil easier to bear.

Objective

- Action: Describe the Culture of Tribalism in Afghanistan
- Condition: Given Student Handouts
- Standard: Described the Culture of Tribalism in Afghanistan

Administrative Data

- Safety Requirements: None
- Risk Level: IV, D, Low
- Environmental Considerations: None
- Evaluation: In-Class Student Checks, Written Test

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Risk Level: IV, D, Low

Environmental Considerations: None

Evaluation: In-Class Student Checks, Written Test

Agenda

- Western stereotypes
- The Bedouin Ideal
- Bedouin Values
- Bedouin legacy
- Cultural Comparison

Tribalism in Afghanistan

- Geography
- History
- People
 - Pashtuns
 - Hazaras
 - Kafirs
 - Tajiks
 - Uzbeks
 - Others
- Cross Culture Communication

Topics to be discussed include: Geography

History

People

Pashtuns

Hazaras

Kafirs

Tajiks

Uzbeks

Others

Cross Culture Communication

Geography



Overview. The country of Afghanistan located in south-central Asia, is a high, landlocked country a little smaller than Texas. It is bordered on the west by Iran and on the east and south by Pakistan. Its northern neighbors are Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan and China lies to the northeast.

Afghanistan is located between Iran and Pakistan. Afghanistan's physical geography is severe, consisting mainly of inhospitable desert and high mountains. The mountains of the Hindu Kush and the Pamir Knot dominate the country. The Hindu Kush runs roughly east to west through the central part of Afghanistan, with peaks averaging 15,000 to 16,000 feet. The Pamir Knot is a range of high peaks in the Wakhan Corridor, the finger of territory extending from the northeast part of the country. Well over 80% of the Pamir Knot is above 10,000 feet in altitude, with peaks as high as 24,000 feet. While there are a number of passes through the mountains, primarily the Hindu Kush, most are closed by snow in the winter, and only a few have paved roads. During the summers, the passes are navigable by heavy vehicles, but horses, mules, and camels are probably the most efficient means of transport. The Panjshir Valley runs through the Hindu Kush, north of Kabul.

To the west of the Hindu Kush, the land gradually slopes downward into sparsely inhabited, arid to semiarid rocky deserts, broken only by the river systems – the Amu Darya (Oxus), the Hari Rud, the Hilmand-Arghandab, and the Kabul. Most of the water in Afghanistan comes from these great river systems that carry the snowmelt from the mountains into the lower areas of the country, in yearly floods that frequently destroy crops and villages. It has long been recognized that the river systems have the capability to irrigate extensive drier areas through dams, water storage, and irrigation programs. Afghanistan does not suffer from a lack of water but rather from the inability to control and use the water it has.

Plate-tectonic activity in Afghanistan has contributed to the creation of the geologic riches of the country, but has also produced frequent and sometimes deadly earthquakes. Roughly fifty earthquakes are recorded each year. Although most are relatively mild, the most severe earthquakes in recent history occurred in July 1985 and March 2002. Both measured around 7.2 on the Richter scale with their epicenters sited in the Hindu Kush.

Geography

■ Climate

- Arid to Semiarid Steppe
 - Winters are very Cold
 - Northern Mtns are Sub-Arctic in Winter
 - Summers are very hot
- “Wind of 120 Days”
- Dust Storms
- Effects of Precipitation

Climate. The climate of Afghanistan is typical of an arid or semiarid steppe. The winters are characteristically very cold, with temperatures dropping well below freezing, while the summers are hot and dry. The mountain regions of the northeast are sub-arctic, with dry, cold winters. Along the mountains that border Pakistan, there are some fringe effects from the monsoon, which brings tropical air masses that impact the climate between July and September. These air masses, at times, can advance into central and southern Afghanistan, bringing increased humidity and some rain.

On the intermountain plateaus, the winds do not blow very strongly. However, in the Sistan Basin near Iran, severe blizzards can occur during winter, generally December through February. The “wind of 120 days” is a northerly wind that blows across the western and southern regions of Afghanistan during the summer months of June to September. This wind is usually accompanied by intense heat, drought, and sand storms. In addition, dust and whirlwinds frequently occur during the summer months on the flats in the southern part of the country. Rising at midday or in the early afternoon, these “dust winds” advance at velocities ranging between 60 and 110 miles per hour, raising high clouds of dust.

Temperature and precipitation are controlled by the exchange of air masses. The highest temperatures and the lowest precipitation occur in the southern plateau region where the land is drought-ridden and poorly watered. This region extends over the boundaries into Iran and Pakistan.

The Central Mountains represent another distinct climatic region. From the Koh-e Baba Range to the Pamir Knot, January temperatures may drop to 5 F or lower in the highest mountain areas; July temperatures vary between 32 and 80 F depending on altitude. In the mountains, the annual mean precipitation, most of which is snow, increases eastward. Precipitation in these regions and the eastern monsoon area is about 16 inches per year. Permanent snow covers the highest mountain peaks with depths as much as 6.6 feet during the winter months.

Precipitation generally fluctuates greatly during the course of the year in all parts of the country. Surprise rainstorms often transform the episodically flowing rivers and streams from puddles to torrents; unwary invading armies have been trapped in such flooding more than once in Afghanistan's history. Nomadic and semi-nomadic Afghans have also succumbed to the sudden flooding of their camps.

The climate of the Turkistan Plains, which extend northward from the Northern Foothills, represents a transition between mountain and steppe climates. Aridity increases and temperatures rise with the drop in altitude.

History

■ Overview

- Tie to geographic location
- The crossroads of Central, South, & West Asia
- Migration left a mix of ethnicities
- Evidence of inhabitants back to 50,000 BC

Overview. Afghanistan's history, its political development, foreign relations, and very existence as an independent state have largely been determined by its geographic location. Afghanistan is at the crossroads of Central, West, and South Asia.

Migrating groups have passed through the region over the centuries and have left behind a blend of ethnic and linguistic influences. Evidence of human habitation in Afghanistan dates back to 50,000 B.C. Artifacts indicate the people were small farmers and herdsmen, as they are today, very probably grouped into tribes, with small local kingdoms rising and falling through the ages. Afghanistan has also seen its share of vast armies passing through and establishing temporary local control when necessary.

Urban civilization on the Iranian plateau, which includes most of Iran and Afghanistan, may have begun as early as 3000 to 2000 B.C. However, little is known about the area before the middle of the first millennium B.C., when its history began to be recorded during the Achaemenid Empire.

History

■ Early Conquests

- Darius the Great (500 BC)
- Alexander the Great (329 BC)
- Kushans (100 BC)
- Muslim Arabs
- Mongol Invasion (1220 AD)
- Tamerlane
- Moghul Empire

Early Conquests

The first of the conquerors who marched into Afghanistan was Darius the Great, who in 500 B.C. expanded the Achaemenid/Persian Empire as far east as the Kabul-Jalabad-Peshawar area. The Achaemenids were enlightened rulers who permitted some regional autonomy through the creation of 20 separate provinces throughout the empire. A 1,550-mile highway linked the provinces and, using relays of mounted couriers, the most remote areas of the empire could be reached in fifteen days.

Alexander the Great also marched through Afghanistan in 329 B.C., extending his own empire to the northernmost and easternmost parts. Alexander had to battle the local inhabitants for every bit of territory he gained.

The next major invasion into Afghanistan was in the 1st century B.C. The Kushans, a loose union of five central Asian nomadic tribes, took Afghanistan from the Greeks and held power over the area for several centuries. Around this time, the Western world established cultural and economic ties with China, and many of the routes of the Silk Road ultimately ran through the Afghan area. The Silk Road carried Buddhism northward from India. One of the greatest cultural achievements of the Kushans was the carving in the third and fourth centuries A.D. of the world's largest Buddha figures—one of them 175 feet tall, the other 125 feet—in the sandstone cliffs close to present-day Bamiyan. (It was those statues that the Taliban blew up in 2001, amid much publicity, on the premise that it is offensive to produce representations of the human form.)

Muslim Arabs first brought Islam to Afghanistan in the seventh century A.D. Within 100 years of the prophet Mohammed's death in 632, they had established a new Muslim empire that reached as far as Spain in the west and to central Asia and India in the east. Even the well-established Persians fell under the Muslim Arab influence, although the Arab Empire borrowed much from the Persians, in the same way that the Roman Empire was influenced by the conquered Greeks.

Various Empires

For the next several centuries, Afghanistan was under the power of one conqueror or another. Genghis Khan marched through Afghanistan in 1220, conquering (and destroying) as he went. After his death, some local Afghan chiefs established independent principalities, while others remained under Mongol rule. This situation continued until the end of the 14th century, when Tamerlane, a Turkmen Mongol, conquered a large part of the country as part of the empire he established and extended from India to the Mediterranean.

In the 16th century, Babur, a descendant of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane, made Kabul the capital of an independent principality. He went on to capture Kandahar in 1522 and in 1526 established the Moghul Empire, which lasted until the middle of the 19th century. The Moghul Empire included all of eastern Afghanistan south of the Hindu Kush.

History

- The Beginnings
 - 18th Century
 - Pashtun tribes increased power
 - Durrani Empire (1747)
 - Ahmad Shah Durrani
 - Rivalled Ottomans
 - “Great Game”
 - Anglo-Persian axis
 - Tribal rivalries manipulated

Even while under the Moghul Empire, native Afghan Pashtun tribes were beginning to gain power and exercise influence over increasing areas of the country. In the 18th century, one of these tribal confederations, the Durrani, was granted authority over their homelands around present-day Kandahar. Their leader, Ahmad Shah Durrani, went on to form a Muslim empire in the late 18th century that was second in area only to the Turks' Ottoman Empire. After Ahmad Shah's death, the empire was beset by rebellions on the part of local tribal chiefs, causing Ahmad Shah's son Timur to move the capital from Kandahar to Kabul in 1776.

Ahmad Shah's grandson Zaman seized the throne after his father's death in 1793. Zaman was interested in reestablishing power in India, but the British, who were well established in India by this time, persuaded the Shah of Persia to divert Zaman's attention from India by threatening the western side of his empire. The Shah obliged and Zaman hurried back to Afghanistan in 1800 to defend his land. His own brother, who agreed to work with the Shah, defeated him.

This kind of struggle for power – tribe against tribe, family against family, brother against brother – characterizes the intertribal relationships among the Afghans, and continued as their territory became crucial to the interests of greater powers, most notably the czarist Russians in the north and the British in the south.

First Anglo-Afghan War 1838

- Objective – Depose Dost Mohammad
 - Peshawar
 - Diplomatic relations with Russia
- Advanced w/ little resistance
- British settle in
 - Prices & Taxes raised
- Riots lead to general uprising
 - 300 troops killed
 - Envoy & deputy killed
- Safe passage promised

Objective – Depose Dost Mohammad

Peshawar

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British Retreat from Kabul – January 6, 1842

- Nearest garrison in Jalalbad (90 miles)
- Army of the Indus
 - 500 British soldiers
 - 200 British dependents
 - 3,800 Indian soldiers
 - 12,000 Indian campworkers
- Pashtuns attack baggage train
- Massacre in Khoord-Cabool Pass
 - Only Survivor – Dr. Brydon
 - Included General Eliphistone
 - 59 soldiers, 19 wives, 22 children held as hostages
- Two British armies return to Afghanistan
 - Destroy bazaar in Kabul then withdraw
 - Dost Mohammad returns from exile in India to throne

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Second Anglo-Afghan War 1878-1880

- Russians again send diplomatic mission to Kabul
- British invade with 35,000 troops
- Easily take Kabul
- Treaty grants British control over Afghan foreign affairs
- Withdraw some troops
- Jihad declared
- British embassy destroyed by mob
- British troops take Khandahar & withdraw

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History

- Formation of a Nation
 - Abdurrahman Khan (1880)
 - Durrani Pashtun
 - Defeated enemy Pashtun
 - Constrained by Russia, British Raj, & Persia
 - Forced relocation of Pashtun enemies
 - Formed boundaries of modern AF
 - Russia – Amu Darya
 - British Raj – Durand Line

Around 1880, Abdurrahman Khan, a Durrani Pashtun and a fine soldier who had learned military strategy from a British mentor, declared himself Emir of Kabul. During the next 10 years, he engaged in a series of battles with tribal leaders, gaining control over area after area until he controlled almost all of modern Afghanistan.

Constrained by the competing dictates of powerful Russian and British empires to his north and south, as well as Persia, Abdurrahman concentrated on establishing a single kingdom. To do so, he had to break the power still held by local tribes. He accomplished this in part by forcing movements of enemy Pashtuns to non-Pashtun areas north of the Hindu Kush, where their descendants still live. Another of his strategies to divide the tribes was to establish provincial governorships with boundaries that did not coincide with tribal boundaries.

It was during Abdurrahman's reign that the modern boundaries of Afghanistan were established. In 1891, after much saber rattling, the Russians and the British, with Abdurrahman only as observer, agreed that the Amu Darya, once known as the Oxus River, would form the boundary between Russia and the Afghan territory. The fertile agricultural area between the river and the mountains remained in Afghan control.

In 1893, the Durand Line was drawn to establish the spheres of interest between Afghanistan and British India. The line was named for Sir Mortimer Durand, who used subtle threats to persuade Abdurrahman to agree to the boundary. The Durand Line was not originally intended as a physical boundary between Afghanistan and India, but it ultimately became just that and now forms the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Third Anglo-Afghan War 1919

- Rioting in India and World War One
- Afghan Amanullah Khan declares Jihad
- Invades India
- Britain responds w/ 50,000 troops & airplanes
- Amanullah sues for peace
- Treaty of Rawalpindi recognizes Afghani Independence

Rioting in India and World War One

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History

- “Modernization”
 - 1921 Treaty of friendship with Bolsheviks
 - 40 years of moderate gov't and European influence
 - Islamic backlash
 - Hostile existence w/ Pakistan
 - PM Daoud Khan (1953 -63)
 - Cold War manipulator
 - King Zahir Shah & “New Democracy”
 - Daoud returns to power in 1973 coup

In 1921, the Afghans concluded a treaty of friendship with the new Bolshevik regime in the Soviet Union. Afghanistan became one of the first nations to recognize the Soviet government, and a special relationship evolved between the two governments that lasted until December 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan.

Amanullah was open to European influence, and pushed for educational reform and the emancipation of women. These proposals infuriated the Muslim religious leaders, and resulted in tribal revolts that led to the seizure of Kabul and Amanullah's abdication in 1929.

Over the next 40 years, a series of cautious and moderate governments under the Afghan monarchy brought political stability to the country, and allowed it to make substantial strides toward modernization and national unity. Always, however, there was substantial resistance to any attempts at social change from the conservative religious elements of the society. While the monarchy was always Pashtun, it was the non-Pashtun, Dari-speaking Afghans who provided the more liberal, Western-looking influences in the country.

In 1931, the government drew up a constitution, an amalgamation of Turkish, Iranian, and French constitutions overlaid with aspects of the Hanafi *shari'a* (set of laws) of Sunni Islam. The constitution established a *loya jirga* ('large meeting,' or, in modern terms, parliament), a term used today in discussions of future governments in Afghanistan. The constitution left power in the hands of the monarchy, gave judiciary power to religious leaders, and created an economic framework that allowed free enterprise. A national economy developed in the 1930s under the leadership of several entrepreneurs who began small-scale industrial projects.

World War II brought about a slowdown in the development process. During the war, Afghanistan maintained its traditional neutrality.

Shah Mahmud, prime minister from 1946 to 1953, and head of the Liberal Parliament, sanctioned free elections and a relatively free press. The country's conservatives and religious elements objected and supported the seizure of power in 1953 by Lieutenant General Mohammad Daoud Khan, who became prime minister for the next 10 years.

In keeping with the agreement of 1921, Daoud Khan turned to the Soviet Union for economic and military assistance. The Soviets ultimately became Afghanistan's major aid and trade partner, but shared the stage with the United States. The competition between the superpowers in aid of nonaligned Afghanistan benefited Afghanistan's infrastructure: Its roads and hydroelectric dam

■ Notes Continue

systems were in turn funded and directed by the Soviets and Americans. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviets also aided Afghanistan in developing ports on the Afghan side of the Amu Darya, opposite railheads on the Soviet side. Goods to and from Afghanistan were transported across the river by steamers and barges pulled by tugboats.

Daoud Khan successfully introduced women into the labor force by allowing them to go unveiled if they wished and by abolishing the practice of secluding them from public view. When religious leaders protested, he challenged them to cite a single verse of the Qur'an specifically mandating veiling. When they continued to resist, he jailed them for a week.

Foreign relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have been strained since Pakistan was formed in 1947. Much of the difficulty can be traced to the Durand Line, which divides a number of the eastern Afghan Pashtun tribes. The Pashtun are comprised of over 60 clans with 12.5 million residing in Afghanistan and the remaining 14 million in Pakistan.

Afghanistan and Pakistan severed relations on September 6, 1961 and traffic between the two countries came to a halt. By 1963, it became clear that neither Daoud Khan nor Ayub Khan, then ruler of Pakistan, would yield and to settle the issue one of them would have to be removed from power. Afghanistan's economy was suffering from the dispute and in March 1963, with the backing of the royal family, King Zahir Shah sought Daoud Khan's resignation on the basis that the country's economy was deteriorating as a result of his position regarding the Pashtun tribes in Pakistan. Daoud Khan resigned.

Two weeks after Daoud Khan's resignation, the king appointed a commission to draft a new constitution. In the spring of 1964, he ordered the convening of a loya jirga--a countrywide gathering. Although the assemblage of 452 persons was composed primarily of officials who would support the royal line, the loya jirga also included members elected from around the entire nation.

King Zahir's "New Democracy" promised much but delivered little. Daoud Khan seized power again in 1973 in a virtually bloodless coup. His comeback was seen as a welcome return to strongman rule. Leftist military officers assisted in the overthrow. Daoud Khan abolished the 1964 constitution and established the Republic of Afghanistan, with himself as chairman of the Central Committee of the Republic and prime minister. King Zahir Shah went into exile in Rome.

History

- Soviet Occupation
 - Daoud assassinated in 1978
 - People's Democratic Party of AF seizes power
 - Marxist Reforms spark rebellion in rural areas
 - Soviets invade to prop up gov't
 - Millions of Refugees
 - *JIHAD!*
 - Soviets withdraw '98
 - Communists fall in '92
 - Anarchy ensues

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan was formed in 1977, and seized control of the government in 1978 with Daoud Khan's assassination. Their Marxist reform programs sparked major rebellions in the countryside and Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in 1979 to prevent their Afghan clients from being overthrown. In the war that followed, groups of Afghan mujaheddin were able to mount a successful guerrilla resistance. Millions of Afghan civilians fled into Pakistan and Iran to escape the destructive Soviet military campaigns against the insurgency. The guerrillas kept control of most of the countryside, and the Soviet troops held the cities and those areas near local garrisons.

The United States supported the Afghan rebels, pouring supplies and weapons into the country via Pakistan. U.S.-made Stingers, hand-held anti-aircraft missiles, were a key factor in driving the Soviets out. Until the United States equipped the rebels with Stingers, they had been unable to counter air attacks.

The struggle against the Soviets, which was styled a *jihad*, or religious war, was fought by the *mujaheddin*, or freedom fighters. The mujaheddin was comprised mostly of Pashtuns. The struggle also attracted conservative Muslims to the Afghan cause. One of those was the Saudi Arab Osama bin Laden, who went to Afghanistan in 1979 to join the Afghan resistance. While in Afghanistan, bin Laden founded the Maktab al-Khidimat (MAK), which recruited fighters from around the world and imported equipment to aid the Afghan resistance against the Soviet army.

After years of futile effort, the Soviet Union withdrew its 100,000 troops from Afghanistan from May 1988 to February 1989. After the Soviets had left the country, the United States withdrew as well, leaving Afghanistan to its own devices. The civil war continued between the guerrilla soldiers and the government, which was still communist. In April 1992, several rebel factions succeeded in capturing Kabul, overthrowing the communist government, and establishing a provisional Islamic republic headed by the Tajik northerner Bernahuddin Rabbani. Rival rebel groups fought among themselves, however, and the civil war continued.

A period of anarchy ensued, during which the government was powerless, and the rival groups seized anything of value in the country to pay and supply the troops with which they jockeyed for power. The economy was in a shambles, and the situation became so bad in the cities that it was dangerous to venture out into the streets, particularly for women

History

■ Recent History

- Taliban
 - Developed in PK Madrassas during Jihad
- Captured Kabul '96
- Extreme *Sharia*
- Safe haven for Usama bin Laden

The Taliban developed in religious schools in Pakistan. (*Talib* is the Arabic/Persian/Pashto word for 'student'; *-an* is the Dari/Pashto masculine plural.) They were mostly young, poorly educated Pashtuns, many of whom lost their fathers and uncles in the struggle against the Soviets. They fought off rival mujaheddin and other warlords, and went on to take the city of Kandahar, beginning a successful campaign that ended with their capture of Kabul in September 1996. Their success was largely due to their ability to restore civil order after the chaos of the preceding war years.

The Taliban restored order by imposing extreme interpretations of Islamic law, with severe restrictions on the activities of women. Measures were enforced with public floggings and stoning. Their extreme measures alienated most of the world. Only Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia recognized the Taliban government, while the rest of the world continued to recognize the Rabbani government, although by then it controlled little of the country.

In 1996, the Taliban extended safe haven to Osama bin Laden, who had returned to Saudi Arabia from Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal to work in the family construction business. From Afghanistan, Bin Laden called for a jihad against the United States.

Al Qaeda, the terrorist organization led by bin Laden, has been identified as the organization behind terrorist acts against the United States, the most renowned being the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. The United States demanded the surrender of bin Laden for his part in 9/11, but the Taliban refused to give him up, claiming that Pashtunwali (specifically, their concept of hospitality and the responsibility of a host to protect a guest) did not allow them to. In the recent conflict, pro-American fighters decimated the Taliban's fighting force and their rule ended. A provisional government has been established, and the country is tentatively beginning, once again, to rebuild.

Refugees



A consequence of the constant strife and warfare in Afghanistan has been the flood of refugees seeking to escape.

People

■ Overview

- Approx 28 Mil
- Ethnic Mosaic
 - No real boundaries
 - 40+ groups
 - 50+ languages
- First Loyalty to family and tribe
- Afghan Nationalism is an abstract idea
 - Language and culture guide associations
- Share basic qualities

Overview. Afghanistan has never been inhabited by only one ethnic group. Its ethnic mosaic has no precise boundaries, nor is its national culture uniform. Few of its ethnic groups are indigenous and few maintain racial homogeneity. The modern country's boundaries were determined by the interests of foreign powers, and on every side they cut arbitrarily through land traditionally occupied by one ethnic group or another. Within Afghanistan there are over 40 major ethnicities who speak over 50 separate languages or dialects. Its citizens naturally identify with those who speak their language and share their culture. Their loyalty is first to their local leaders and their tribe. Identification with an abstract Afghan nation has always been fragile.

While the different groups differ in language and culture, they also share fundamental qualities. One of the most striking qualities of the Afghan people is their toughness and resilience. Popular culture is based on tradition, steeped in religion and colored by tribal war, romance, and magic.

There has never been an accurate population census taken in Afghanistan, but the most common estimate is approximately 28 million. One out of five people are thought to be in refugee camps along the country's borders and in neighboring nations. Pakistan has given refuge to 3 million Afghan refugees.

Ethnicity only plays one part in understanding Afghanistan and its people. Afghanistan is organized according to many other factors. For example, far more Pashtuns were opposed to the Taliban than was generally reported, with two of the United Front's (Northern Alliance's) six factions being comprised primarily of Pashtuns. Afghanistan's **ethnic diversity** should also not hide the many traits which nearly all Afghans share: rugged independence and a generally egalitarian spirit. Afghans are lovers of freedom and are motivated by a common desire to resist outside influence over internal affairs.



■ Notes Continue

Ethnic identities fade in importance when Afghans sense that they are confronted with a common enemy who seek to control Afghanistan.

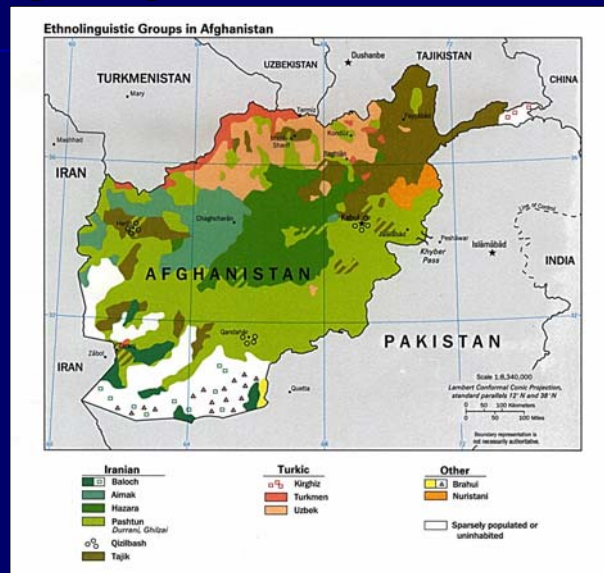
Afghanistan's ethnic diversity does not mean that the members of the different ethnic groups do not interact. There is a substantial amount of intermarriage between the ethnic groups. This intermarriage tends to blur lines of loyalty between different ethnic groups. For example, the main Tajik commander around Mazar-e-Sharif, Atta Mohammed, is married to a Pashtun and owes his life to his in-laws who were able to smuggle him out of the area when the Taliban took over. Similarly, the current foreign minister, Dr. Abdullah, had a Pashtun father from Kandahar while his mother was a Tajik from the Panjshir valley. One of the current deputy defense ministers, Zabet Saleh Registani, has a Hazara mother and a Tajik father. The current Tajik Interior Minister, Yunus Qanuni, is married to a Pashtun, and the former Tajik President, Burhanuddin Rabbani, has a Pashtun daughter-in-law. Afghanistan's ethnic diversity is also complicated by the fact that the Afghan notion of ethnicity is different than the view commonly held in the West. Ethnicity or identity, known as *qawm* in Afghanistan, is not only defined by a common cultural or genetic group, but also by tribes, families, and geographic regions, or even occupations. In fact, in many instances an Afghan will not primarily define himself as a "Pashtun" or a "Tajik," but as a member of the "Zadran" tribe or an inhabitant of the "Panjshir" valley. These types of identifiers include a sense of loyalty to a group that is providing the individual with things that are essential to live. The breakdown of the state during and after the Soviet-Afghan war made these types of relationships even more important than they were earlier in this century.



■ Notes Continue

These types of identifiers are not traditionally what westerners view as ethnic characteristics, but are relevant in understanding how an individual will react in a given situation. This makes it difficult to understand Afghan ethnicity and the relationship of ethnicity to politics and security. While the larger ethnic identities of Pashtuns, Uzbeks, and Tajiks, etc., do exist, and while they are important at a general level in understanding Afghan society, politics, economics, and security, these categories are only general descriptions of how Afghans view themselves and one another. In some areas of Afghanistan, the Western notion of ethnicity has become so politicized that it has become rude to inquire immediately of an Afghan's ethnic identity (i.e. Tajik, Pashtun, Uzbek), similar to asking an American the details of his income.

Languages



Language Roots

The two major languages in Afghanistan are *Pashto* and *Persian* (Persian is known as *Dari* in Afghanistan). Both are Iranian languages. The fact that they are related is obvious even to the casual observer, although the historical connection is not very close. *Dari* is the principal West Iranian language and *Pashto* the principal East Iranian language. They may have first begun to split apart several centuries B.C.

The Iranian languages form one branch of the Indo-European language family. This family also includes the Romance languages such as French and Spanish and the Germanic languages such as German and English. *Pashto* and *Dari* are, therefore, very distantly related to English.

Uzbek and *Turkmen*, spoken by minorities in the northern areas of Afghanistan, are closely related to Turkish and the languages of the Central Asian republics (formerly the Soviet Socialist Republics). A good number of Afghans, especially from the southern part of the country, also speak and understand Urdu, the official literary language of Pakistan, and Punjabi, the language of Punjab in northwest India.

Although the languages in Afghanistan are written using adaptations of the Arabic alphabet, none of them are related to Arabic. Arabic is a member of the Semitic language family, which also includes Hebrew. The Semitic languages come from completely different roots than the Iranian languages spoken in Afghanistan.

Language Use

In a multi-language environment like Afghanistan, different languages are often favored in different situations. Thus, *Dari* may be preferred under some circumstances, while *Pashto* may be preferred in others.

Pashto was designated a national language of Afghanistan by the Pashtuns in the various constitutions. During the period of modernization, all non-*Pashto*-speaking government workers were required to learn the language. *Pashto* was also required as a subject in elementary schools where instruction was in *Dari*. The *Pashto* language also served as a national symbol because it is commonly associated with Afghanistan, despite the fact that around half its speakers live in Pakistan. Even so, *Pashto* has never had the status of *Dari*, which has a vast cultural and literary tradition.

■ Notes Continue

Dari speakers are more diverse. Dari has always been the prestige language in Afghanistan. It is the language used when speakers of different languages need to conduct business or otherwise communicate. In Afghanistan, all education above primary school is conducted in Dari, except specific Pashto language study. Pashto speakers are frequently bilingual in Dari, but Dari speakers rarely learn more than a few words of Pashto. Speakers of other languages in Afghanistan frequently pick up Dari as a matter of course, except in the totally Pashtun areas of the south. Both Dari and Pashto are spoken among Afghans in the United States, although Dari has been more prevalent in recent years.

Features of Dari and Pashto

Both Dari and Pashto are written using the Arabic alphabet. Although they are different languages, they share common roots in the Iranian family of languages. As such, they share common letters and some words, and their word order and verb systems are similar.

Both languages have a basic word order in which the direct object comes before the verb. They also have verb systems that resemble the English verb system in basic ways. Dari nouns have no grammatical gender, but are marked for person and number (singular and plural). Verbs agree with the subject in person and number. Pashto is more complex than Dari in terms of word formation. It has several classes of masculine and feminine nouns and adjectives as well as complex sets of weak and strong pronouns.

Dari and Pashto have many words in common. This overlapping vocabulary is a result of the ancestral words they both share as members of the Iranian language family, as well as the fact that they have been spoken side by side for centuries.

Both languages have a number of words borrowed from Arabic, as do all the languages spoken by Islamic peoples. Also, as is true of all languages, the dialects of Dari and Pashto spoken in areas adjacent to other languages are likely to have more borrowed words from those languages.

Writing Systems

Both languages are written in the Arabic alphabet, which reads from right to left and connects letters in cursive style. Dari has four extra letters to represent sounds that don't occur in Arabic. Pashto has the four extra letters that occur in Dari, plus an additional eight letters. Because the Arabic alphabet does not use symbols to represent vowels (except in the Qur'an), it is impossible to transliterate from Dari or Pashto to English letter by letter, and there are a number of ways to spell the vowels.

Pashtuns



- 44% of Population
 - 12.5 Million in AF
 - 14 Million in PK
- Ethnic Majority
- Caucasians
- Fierce Warriors
- Sunni
- Distinctive tribal customs

The Pashtuns

The *Pashtuns*, or *Pushtuns*, make up approximately 44% of the population of Afghanistan, and represent the ethnic majority. Though their origin is unclear, their legends say that they are the descendants of Afghana, grandson of King Saul. Most scholars, however, believe that the Pashtuns probably arose from an intermingling of ancient and subsequent invaders.

Pashtuns are Caucasians, of medium height, with strong, straight noses and black hair. Many Pashtuns have dark eyes, although there is also a high incidence of blue, green, and gray eyes: The young girl with the unforgettable blue eyes featured in many *National Geographic* publications and posters is a Pashtun, or *Pashtana*, the feminine form. The language of the Pashtuns is *Pashto* (also spelled *Pushto*, *Pushtu*, *Pashtu*, and sometimes *Paxto*).

When Westerners caution against optimism in battle against the Afghans, it is the Pashtuns they have in mind. The 'Afghans' that the British futilely battled against in the 19th century were the Pashtuns. The majority of the *mujaheddin* ('warriors in a holy war') who ultimately drove the Soviets out of Afghanistan were Pashtuns. Much of the civil war that followed the Soviet withdrawal was fought between rival Pashtun leaders, who had amassed weapons and followers during their fight against the Soviets.

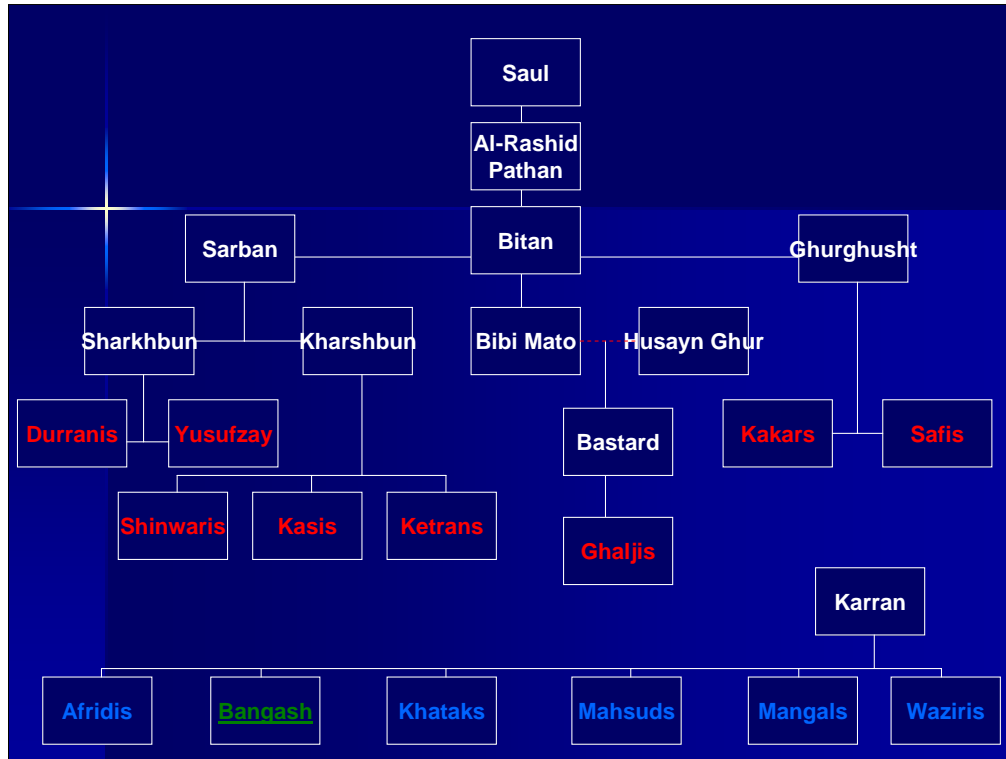
Pashtuns are fierce fighters and are known for their marksmanship. They are accustomed to hardship and poverty and can prevail in conditions that would easily defeat others. At the same time, though deeply dedicated to their religious beliefs, they also cultivate nonreligious cultural traditions. They are poets with a wonderful oral literature who can quote poetry by the hour.

The Pashtuns are Sunni Muslims, but their Islamic beliefs and behavior have often been tempered and changed by cultural values. Distinctive tribal customs and traditions form an integral part of the Pashtun society. Pashtun cultural values are reflected in a code of ethics called simply *Pashto* in Pashto, and *Pashtunwali* ('the way of the Pashtun') by non-Pashtuns.

Pashtun History

- Constant warfare & invasion
- Pashtun tribes circa 14th – 16th Centuries
 - Mixing of Iranian, Indian, Turkic peoples
 - Feudal society to this day
- Fierce independence
 - Ghajis led revolts against Safavid Empire
 - Great Britain fought three times (1838-42, 1878-90, 1919)
 - Afghanistan first nation to recognize USSR
 - Afghan-Soviet War (1980-1989)

Warfare is the history of the Pashtun people. Either internally or against foreign invaders. It is thought that Pashtun tribes finished formulation between the 14th and 16th Centuries as result of the mixing of Iranian, Indian, and Turkic peoples. A feudal society formed and persists to this day. During the 18th Century, Ghajis tribes led revolts against Persian rule. This was followed by three victorious wars with Great Britain (1838-42, 1878-80, & 1919). In the first two wars the Pashtun united with other ethnicities against the British, and in 1842 an entire British army of 14,000 was destroyed. Following the Russian Revolution, Afghanistan was the first nation to recognize the Soviet Union, and on February 28, 1928, the Soviet-Afghan treaty was ratified. This ironic considering the Pashtun would again unite and drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan in the 1980-1989 Soviet-Afghan war.



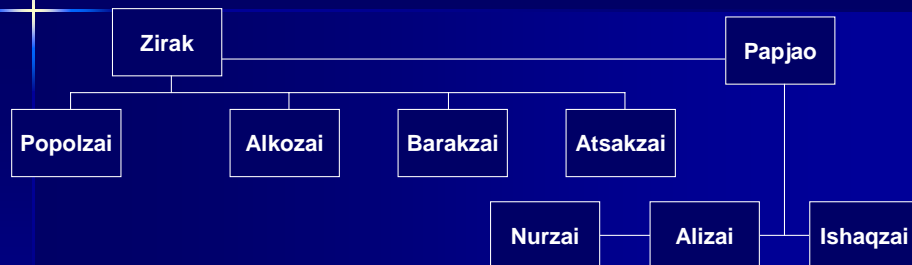
Pashtuns are divided into tribes, kaum or qabili, and sub-divided into sub-tribes or clans. Tribes usually join a tribal confederation, a significant number are named after a legendary ancestor, to which the suffix khel (kin) or zai (son) is attached. Qays Abd' al-Rashid Pathan is the ancestor of all Pashtuns. They also claim lineage from King Saul (first King of Israel). The three sons of al-Rashid Pathan are Sarban, Bitan, and Ghurghusht. Sarban's eldest son was Sharkhbun and his descendents are found in South Afghanistan. Sarban's other son, Kharshbun, has descendants in the Peshawar valley. The Pashtun's of west Afghanistan are called the Durrani and are descended from Sharkhbun's son Abdalis. The Pashtun in Pakistan are descended from Kharshbun's son Yusufzay, and his descendents live north of Peshawar. The Shinwaris, Pashtun in the Jalalabad vicinity, are descended from Kharshbun's son Kasi. Bitan had a daughter, Bibi Mato who married a foreigner named Husayn Ghur. She conceived an illegitimate son before they were wed and the Ghaljis tribe is descended from them. This accounts for the lower status of the Ghaljis among the Pashto tribes. Pathan's third son was Ghurghusht and two tribes are descended from him; the Kakars and the Safis.

The two main tribal confederations in Afghanistan are the Durrani and the Ghaljis, while a third, the Mohmand confederation, spans both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The fourth branch of the Pashto are found throughout western Pakistan. They are descendants of Karran, who was either Pathan's fourth son, or was adopted by Pathan. The tribes claiming Karran as an ancestor are the; Afridis, Bangash (Shi'a), Khataks, Mahsuds, Mangals, and the Waziris.

The overwhelming majority of Pashtuns are Sunni Muslims with the exception of the Bangash tribe in Pakistan, which are Shi'a.

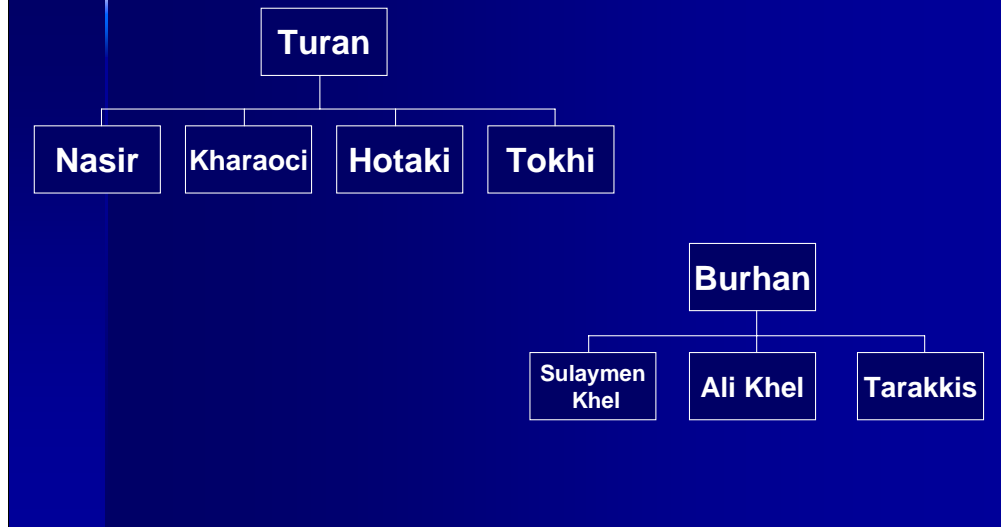
Durrani



The Taleban were primarily from the Durrani confederation

The Durrani are the most powerful and influential tribal confederation in Afghanistan. The King of Afghanistan has always been a Durrani. The Durrani are divided into two branches; the Zirak and the Panjpao. Tribes within the Zirak branch include the Popolzai (east of Kandahar and west of the Helmand River), the Alkozai (east of Kandahar and north of Helmand), the Barakzai (southwest of Kandahar in the Arghestan River Valley), and the Atsakzai (Zamindawar region and along the Kohdaman Ridge). Tribes within the Panjpao branch include the Nurzai (southwest and western Afghanistan), the Alizai (Zamindawar and Helmand), and the Ishaqzai (west of Kandahar, Farah region, and in Seistan).

Ghalji



The Ghalji confederacy is divided into two groups, the Turan (western) and the Burhan (eastern). The Turan include the Nasir, Kharaoci, Hotaki, and Tokhi (Qalat-I Ghilzai) tribes. The Burhan includes the Sulaymen Khel (southeast of Kabal to Jalalabad), the Ali Khel (Mukur region), and the Tarakkis (Mukur) tribes. In the 18th Century, the Ghalji led a series of revolts against the Persian Safavid Empire.

Pashtun Values

- Led by Khan or Malik
- Jirga (Council of Elders)
- High Power Distance
- **Pashtunwali** (Honor)
 - *Malmastiya* (hospitality)
 - *Nanawatay* (asylum)
 - *Badal* (revenge)
 - *Tureh* (bravery)
 - *Sabats* (steadfastness)
 - *Imamdari* (righteousness)
 - *Ghayrat* (defending property & honor)
 - *Mamus* (defending females)
- Warrior Poets

Pashtun tribes and clans are nominally led by a Khan or Malik, but his rule is not absolute. The title of khan is usually ascribed to the leader of a tribe, while malik indicates leadership of a clan. All male members of the tribe have a vote in the tribal meeting known as a jirga (council of elders).

Hospitality (*Malmastiya*) is extremely important to the Pashtun. One of the greatest insults to is carry off another man's guest. The revenge of the slighted man is not directed at the guest, but at the man who carried off the guest. Pashtuns love to throw banquets and feasts, and will often offer his best livestock for an honored guest. They will take great pride in the guest praising the quality and variety of the dishes offered. The sanctity of protecting the guest is also very important to the honor of the Pashtun and this is reflected in the concept of *Nanawatay* or asylum. When a man enters a household he is under the protection of his host. Also, a guest can enter a home and refuse hospitality until he secures the aid or assistance of his host who will then be obliged to assist his guest. It is in this manner that a fugitive can gain the aid of a tribal chief. The strongest form of *nanawatay* is when a woman sends her veil to one of her male neighbors to ask for his assistance. The refusal of such a request will forever stain the man's honor and he cannot refuse.

Pashtuns are patriotic. When a Pashtun living in a foreign land dies, it is a common for them to request to friends and family that they be buried in a family graveyard in Afghanistan. To make this endeavor less expensive the body will often be dismembered and packed into a smaller coffin. Pashtuns can reconcile themselves to poverty, but cannot tolerate foreign rule. The historical truth in this has been learned the hard way by the Greeks, Persians, Arabs, British, and Russians. When a foreign invader invades Afghanistan all tribal feuds are temporarily suspended. A ceremony may even mark the armistice, however, once the invader is driven from Afghanistan feuds may resume where they left off.



■ Notes Continue

This warrior spirit is deeply ingrained and surfaces many times upon examination of Pashtun culture. Even sports is warlike with the most famous example being Buzkashi – the dragging of the goat. A goat or sheep is killed and placed in a circle. Two teams of mounted men then gallop towards the carcass to grab it. The object is to drop the carcass in a circle to score a goal. Games can last as long as four days.

Poetry is also a staple in the Pashtun warrior ethos. Pashtuns often recite poetry to underscore their points in conversation. They also place much emphasis on good manners and politeness.

Pashtun Tribal Law

- Khun (blood money)
 - Highest for soldiers & elders
- Murder – Khun, war, or marriage
- Assault – visible maiming
- Kidnapping = 1.5 khun or 7 fold khun
- Rape – ear or nose of rapist cut-off
- Arson
- Theft of livestock = 9 fold khun

Tribal laws and customs vary from tribe to tribe, but one widely followed is the code of Isakhel, which establishes the penalties for murder, assault, kidnapping of women, property damage, theft, and other transgressions. Murder is paid for in blood money known as khun and is based upon the victim's standing. Khun for elders and soldiers is the highest. If a man beats his wife to death her father can take up her case and revenge the woman as he would a murder. Dishonoring a murdered person is doubled. It is also customary to return the victim's weapon when paying the khun. Besides paying the khun in currency some tribes accept women and female babies as two-thirds of the khun. Failure to pay the khun could result in tribal warfare based on badal, but if the money is not available and the tribes do not want to go to war a marriage will be arranged with the murderer. He can also be forgiven if grasps the bed of his victim or lies in the grave of a family ancestor.

For assault, the khun depends on whether the person is maimed and whether the maimed part of the body is visible or not.

If a girl is forcibly kidnapped, the compensations is one and one-half khun. If the kidnapped girl consents to marry her kidnapper the khun is then doubled. However, the bride-to-be must obtain her father's permission, otherwise he has the right to kill her.

In case of adultery the husband can kill both his wife and his lover if he catches them in the act. Relatives of the deceased are denied revenge and khun. If a man kidnaps another's wife he must pay seven-fold khun. For rape, the ear or nose of the rapist is cut off.

For arson, the arsonist may pay for the lost property and pay a fine for dishonoring the household. The burning of a nomad's tent is treated more harshly than the burning of a house. The theft of livestock requires khun nine-fold. The destruction of farmland requires four times the value of the field. The illegal diversion of water is also subject to a fine.

Values & Beliefs

- Patriarchal, Patrilineal, & Patrilocal
- Paternal Grandfather
- Extended family major socio-economic unit
- Villages are families

Like Arab society, Afghan society is patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal. The head of the family is the paternal grandfather and is called either Mushar or Speengire – “the venerable old man with gray beard”. Likewise, the King is considered the grandfather of the nation, and is held in great reverence. The nuclear family in Afghan society consists of the father and mother, siblings, and half-siblings (when there is more than one wife). The extended family is the major economic and social unit in Pashtun society. The extended family is the nuclear family plus the grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. It is common that an entire village will be populated by one or two extended families.

Values & Beliefs

- Most are Sunni Muslims (Hanafi)
- Strong belief in evil spirits
 - Graveyards, abandoned houses, deserts
- Evil Eye
 - Women, beggars, criminals, diseased people
 - Don't praise a child w/o invoking Allah
- Suspicion of technology
 - Technology & materialism are bad for family
- Nawroz – 21 March

While almost all Pashtun's are Sunni Muslims, there is a strong belief in evil spirits, the "evil eye", and the use of talismans for protection. Pashtun folklore believes that evil spirits dwell in graveyards, abandoned houses, river banks, and deserts. The name of God should be invoked when praising a child to avoid attracting the attention of these evil spirits. Pashtun's believe in the "evil eye", and that certain types of people, especially women, possess the ability to cause bad things to happen. They will go to great lengths to prevent the evil eye by veiling the child or rarely bringing it out in public. Besides women, beggars, criminals, and diseased people are thought to possess the evil eye.

Afghan spirituality leads to suspicion of new technology. An Afghan will tell you that new technology and materialism must be balanced against family bonds and the potential harm against people.

The most festive holiday celebrated by Afghans, and Iranians, is *Nawroz*, the New Year celebration, which occurs on March 21, the vernal equinox. Literally meaning 'new day,' Nawroz is celebrated with picnics, similar to American cookouts. The festival has its roots in *Zoroastrianism*, a religion brought from Persia long before the rise of Islam. During the celebrations, lavish meals are prepared. Two dishes, *samanak* and *haft-mehwah* are specially cooked for the occasion. Samanak is a dessert made of wheat and sugar that can take two days to prepare. Haft-mehwah consists of seven fruits and nuts that symbolize the coming of spring.

Values & Beliefs

- Women are the custodians of family honor
- Marriage
 - Arranged
 - First cousins
 - Dowry & Bride Price
 - First Night
 - Monogamy the rule, but...
 - “Ghagkawal”
 - “Milk Mothers”
- Divorce

The Afghans have similar attitudes toward gender relations as the Arabs. Women are the custodians of the family honor. To compliment the beauty of a man's wife or daughter can be very insulting. Marriages are arranged by parents with advice from older members of the family. With the exception of the rule of the Taliban, women in Afghanistan have traditionally had more personal freedom than Arab women. They were not required to wear the burqa, and most worked outside right along side their husbands.

To keep women and property within the tribe the custom of marrying men to paternal first cousins is common in a similar fashion as Bint Amm in the Arab world. When a man falls in love with a girl he does not tell his parents but has a friend speak to them on his behalf. The parents then approach the guardians of the girl, and the process of arranging the marriage is long and tedious sometimes taking years. The wedding is held at the bride's parent's house. It is not unusual for the groom to meet his bride for the first time at the wedding ceremony. During a traditional ceremony they may not even look directly at each other, but instead see each other through the reflection of hand held mirrors. After the vows there is celebratory gunfire and music. In rural areas a tradition is still observed where the bedsheets are examined to determine whether the bride was a virgin or not. If it is judged she was not, the husband can kill her and the bride's family has to replace her with a sister.

Islam allows a man to take up to four wives, but this is very rare in Afghanistan. If a man dies a brother of the deceased husband can marry her even if he already has a wife. The wife runs the household and raises the children. She has considerable influence over her husband, but he usually controls family finances. To divorce the man only needs to declare “I divorce thee” three times publicly.



■ Notes Continue

The man can remarry immediately but the woman must wait three months to ensure that she was not newly pregnant at the time of the divorce. The major causes of divorce in Pashtun society are barrenness, no son, nagging, and non-payment of the dowry. Women can divorce men for sterility, cruelty, and adultery. One of the greatest insults to a man is the word “Zantalaq” – a man who has divorced his wife. Unmarried people in Afghanistan are rare as marriage is an expectation associated with maturity. Most Pashtun men are married between the ages of 18 to 20, and the women are usually married between the ages of 15 to 17. Because of the harvest, September is the most popular month for weddings in Afghanistan.

If a man falls madly in love with a woman and does not want to wait for the arrangement process to run its course he can propose more directly through a custom called “Ghagkawal”. He goes to her house, stands at the door, and fires his gun into the air. He then asks the tribal elders for her hand in marriage, and the elders approach the girl’s father. The man must also ask for forgiveness for his boldness. The father is then put into a tight spot, because refusing the man can lead to tribal feuding.

A practice in some rural Pashtun villages is for communal wet-nursing. These women are called “milk-mothers”. Men and women who share the same “milk-mother” cannot marry.

Values & Beliefs

- Child-rearing
 - Much celebration with boys
 - Daughters are potential property of other family
 - Naming
 - Childhood for girls
 - Learns domestic chores
 - Helps watch siblings
 - Married at age 15 to 17 (sometimes 12)
 - Childhood for boys
 - Circumcised at 7
 - Manhood reached at 10 to 12
 - Youngest son often the favorite child

When a child is born the entire village will celebrate. Messengers travel to spread the news to relatives living in other regions. Men rush out and fire their weapons into the air. The celebration is especially raucous if the baby is a boy for the family line can only be preserved through the males. For the birth of a daughter, a celebration may not be held as they are considered the potential property of others. For the first several months of life, the baby is bound in linen and kept secluded from the public. The naming of the child is done by consultation. The parents will invite relatives over who will suggest names, but ultimately the father, the father's eldest brother, or the grandfather will have the final say. Names are either of great Pashtun heroes or religious names. Religious names are usually chosen by the father or grandfather who open the Koran and name the baby the first name he randomly comes across. A family is not passed on so a father and son can have totally different names if the son is not named for the father.

For boys it is common that the first name is either Abdul, Mohammed, or Ghulam, and for girls common first names are Gul, Nafas, and Shireen. A second name follows the first, and many also have nicknames that are in fact a part of the formal name. Abdul Hameed Gul-Agha literally means Abdul Hameed the "Flower Master". For a girl with the similar name, you might see Hameeda Shireen Gul meaning "Sweet Flower". Pashtuns from the Kandahar region prefer names with a color motif. For example, Sheen = blue, Tore=black, Bore=gray, and Zargun=green. Tare Paikaye is girl's name meaning "black-haired".

The life-stages of Pashtun women are; pre-puberty, post-puberty, married but childless, with child but no son, mother of a son (obtains title of woman), and post menopause. Her value and esteem in the eyes of her peers depends on which stage she is in.



■ Notes Continue

Before reaching the age of nine or ten, the mother teaches her daughter how to grind wheat and corn, fetch water, cook, mend and wash clothes, make dung patties, and gossip. Daughters are also expected to look after younger siblings.

Fathers take care of the boys until they are seven when they are circumcised and considered to be on the way to becoming a man. If the family can afford it a feast is thrown in his honor and he is permitted to wear a turban. The youngest son is usually the favorite son, and Pashtun fathers are known to be loving and indulgent. The youngest son sits with the father when entertaining guests. Older sons are expected to help their fathers in the field, and learn to ride, shoot, hunt, and herd. A boy is considered a man between the ages of 10 to 12.

Hazaras

- Mongol origin
- Agriculture & Husbandry
- Hazarajat - located in mountainous region between Kabul & Heart
- Divided into Eastern & Western groups
 - Eastern Hazaras = Shi'a
 - Western Hazaras = Sunni
- Organized into clans & tribes
- Traditionally independent of central gov't

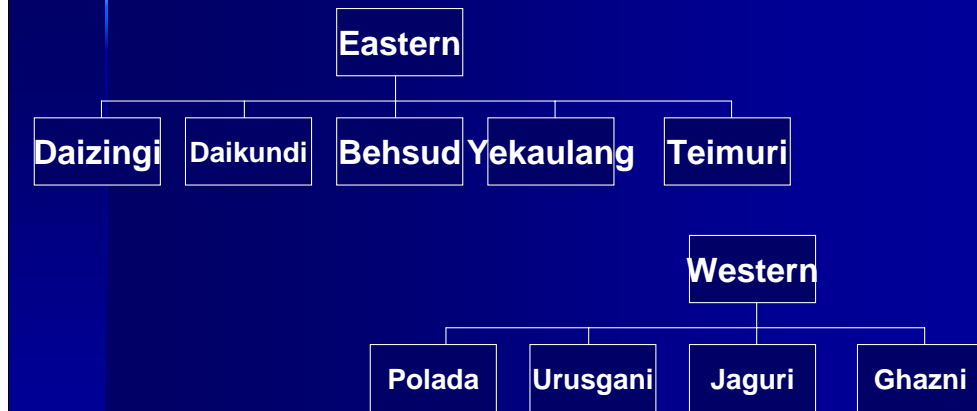
The *Hazaras*, are a Mongolian people thought to have arrived in Afghanistan in the 13th and 14th centuries and are descendants of the Mongol hordes. They have traditionally been nomads, moving their flocks of sheep, goats, and camels from pasture to pasture in the Pamir Knot and southward into the high pasturelands of the Hindu Kush. The Hazaras make up about 10% of the country's population. They refer to their traditional homeland as the Hazarajat. The Hazaras can be divided into two main groups; Eastern (Shi'a) and Western Hazaras (Sunni). Like the other peoples of Afghanistan, the Hazaras are organized into tribes and clans and have traditionally been independent of the central government.

Social Organization

- Feudal society based on land ownership
 - Landlords
 - Family farmers
 - Sharecroppers
- Tribes led by Malik, sometimes hereditary but always a Landlord
- Territory consists of 1 to 3 villages, but sometimes as many as 5
- Malik also serves as gov't official
 - Collecting taxes
 - Reading decrees

The Hazaras also have a feudal social organization. The top social class are the landlords who rent land out and collect rent in the form of a share of the harvest. They are the richest people within Hazara society. The middle class are the family farmers who own their own land. The lowest social class are the Hazaras who rent land from the land owners. Hazara tribes are led by a Malik. The Malik is hereditary in some tribes and selected by consensus in others, but is always a wealthier land owner. The territory of the tribe consists on average of one to three villages, but larger tribes can be comprised of up to five villages. The Malik has also served in the past as a government official as well as a tribal official. The Malik's official duties include tax collection and reading government decrees.

Hazara Tribes



Eastern Hazaras: The largest tribes of the Hazarajat are the Daizingi, Daikundi, and Behsud. They are located south of the Hindu Kush. On the southern slopes of the Hindu Kush are the Yekaulang. The Teimuri live south of Herat.

Western Hazaras: Polada, Urusgani, Jaguri, Ghazni Hazaras

Values & Beliefs

- Patriarchal, Patrilineal, Patrilocal
- Marriage
 - First cousins
 - Monogamy
 - Arranged marriages
 - Bride price
 - Levirate
 - Children belong to the father's family

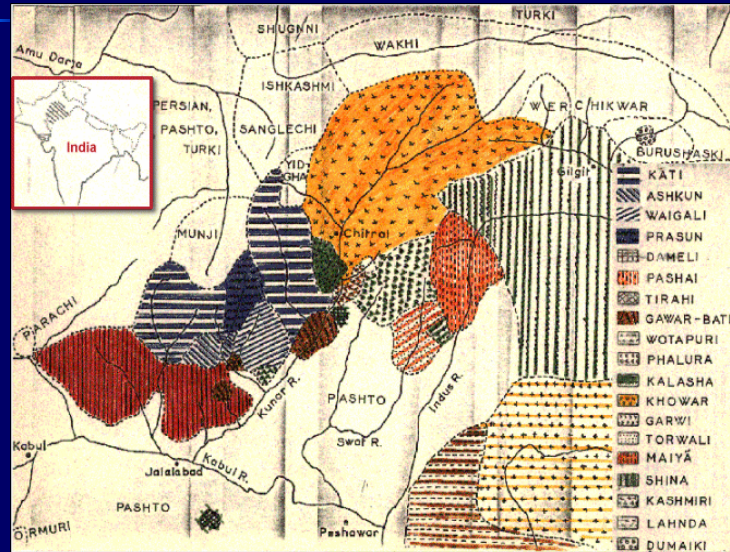
Like most tribal societies, the Hazaras are patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal. Marriages are arranged. The marriage of first cousins, common in the Near East, is also practiced by Hazaras. Monogamy is the norm as is the practice of requiring a bride price. Levirate is practice of a wife being wed to a brother-in-law if she is widowed. Children are considered to be "property" of the father's family instead of the mother's.

Kafirs (Nuristanis)

- Refer to themselves by tribal name
 - Kati
 - Waigeli
 - Prazun
 - Ashkun
 - Wama
- Each tribe speaks unique dialect
 - Kati, Waigeli, Ashkun & Prazun similar
 - Wama unique
 - Nuristani languages mix of Indian-Iranian
- Forcibly converted to Islam at end of 19th Century

The Kati is the largest Kafir tribe. The Western Kati occupy the valleys of the Kantiwo, Kulam, and Ramgol streams. The most important villages are Kantiwo, Aspit, Kulam, Parigel, Wetzergrom, Shamu, and Panshigrom. The Eastern Kati live in the Kunar River valley. Tribal subdivisions of the Eastern Kati include the Kamo, Kanto, Mandagel, and Kushto. The most important villages of the Eastern Kati are Lutdek, Badamuk, Bargromatal, Aptzai, Ptzigrom, and Ahmad-I Devana. Between the two Kati groups lies the Peich River Valley, which is occupied by the Prazun. Their important villages are Pashkigrom, Tussumgrom, Lewergrom, Prunsgrom, and Shtewgrom. The Waigeli live to the south of the Prazun. The Ashkun occupy the upper mountain region between the Peich and Alingar Rivers. The Wama live along the middle portion of the of Peich. Each tribe speaks each its own language and communication between the groups can be very difficult. The Kati, Waigeli, Ashkun, and Prazun speak similar dialects, while the Wama speak a distinct language. The language of the Nuristanis is thought to be an ancient Indian language with some Iranian influence.

Kafirs



Like the other peoples of Afghanistan, the Kafirs are primarily farmers and herders. They divide these tasks by gender with women doing the farming while men tend the flocks. The Kafirs are patriarchal, but differ from the other people of Afghanistan by being matrilineal. Kafirs marry outside of the tribe. A man cannot take a wife from his mother's clan or the clan of his paternal grandmother. The village contains members of 5 to 10 tribes.

Values & Beliefs

- Slavery lasted until end of 19th Century
 - Descendants of slaves have lower socio-economic standing
 - POWs & Debtors
- Village affair ran by elders – Jasts
 - Prerequisites
 - Entertain entire village w/ banquet 10 times
 - Be a good orator
 - Have killed 5 enemies in war
 - Very wealthy Jasts can rise to rank of Mir – Tribal chief
 - Kati Mirs rule for life

The Kafirs also have a feudal society. Until the end of the 19th century, slavery was a common practice. Bari were descendants of prisoners of war, and their children were born into slavery, and tended to be artisans and craftsmen. Lane – debtor slaves. Lane could only be sold within the tribe as they are tribal members. Lane usually performed fieldwork. The village is ran by the elders known as Jasts. To be a Jast a person must entertain the entire village at a banquet ten times, be a good orator, and have killed five enemies in war. The Jast must therefore be relatively wealthy. The wealthiest Jasts serve as tribal chiefs and are called Mir. Within the Kati tribe, Mirs serve for life.

Tajiks

- Principal people of Northern Afghanistan
- 2nd largest group after Pashtuns
- Identify themselves by valley of origin
- Sometimes referred to as Pamir Tajiks
- Hanafi Muslims
- Tajiks & Uzbeks displaced by Pashtuns

The Tajiks and Other Dari-Speaking Groups

The historical influence of Persia, now Iran, on the peoples of Afghanistan can be seen by the number of ethnic groups who speak *Dari*, the name given to the various dialects of Afghan Persian. The Tajiks are the largest and most influential of these groups, and the second largest ethnic group within Afghanistan following the Pashtun.

Believed to be the original Persian population of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, the Tajiks live in an area stretching from northern Afghanistan, across the border from Tajikistan, into the Hindu Kush. They often identify themselves by the particular valley they live in or near.

The Afghan Tajiks are light-skinned Caucasians with aquiline noses and black hair. They share the Caucasian looks of the Iranian peoples, as well as their language. Tajiks constitute an estimated one-quarter of the population of Afghanistan. Half of the Afghans who have fled to Pakistan since 1979 are Tajiks, and approximately 65% of Afghan refugees in the United States belong to this group. Both Tajiks and Uzbeks have been displaced from their traditional homes by expanding Pashtun tribes.

Values & Beliefs

- Major tribes & dialects
 - Wakhani
 - Ishkashimi
 - Shunguns
 - Munjani
 - Sarghulami
- “Non ham non, nonreza ham non” – Tajik proverb
- Hospitality
- Use Islamic etiquette
- Strong work ethic

The major tribes of the Tajiks are the Wakhani, the Ishkashimi, the Shunguns, the Munjani, and the Sarghulami. Each tribe also speaks a dialect of Dari, the primary language of the Tajiks. The Wakhani are located within both Afghanistan and Pakistan and are Ismaili Shi'a. The majority of the Ishkashimi live in the Pamirs on the upper reaches of the River Pyandzh in the Province of Badakhshan in northern Afghanistan.

The most important cultural symbol to the Tajiks with the exception of the valley where they live is bread. The Tajik proverb “Non ham non, nonreza ham non” translates to “Bread is bread, crumbs are also bread”. Bread should be treated with respect and not thrown out. The leftovers which are not consumed are fed to the animals. Hospitality is important to Tajiks. The guest is expected to sit furthest from the door. The Tajiks are predominantly Sunni Muslim of the Hanafi school of law. They are devout Muslims and strong in their faith. A proud, hard-working people, the Tajiks are known for their warmth and gracious hospitality, though recent events have made them more apprehensive toward outsiders. Tajiks eat on the floor and sit around a “tablecloth”. Do not step on the tablecloth or over other guests, but walk behind them. When visiting with the Tajiks use Islamic etiquette.

Uzbeks

Major tribes

- Kataghan (Kunduz)
- Sarai (Mazar-I-Sharif & Balkh)
- Ming (Mazar-I-Sharif & Balkh)
- Kungrat (Kunduz & Mazar-I-Sharif)
- Durmen (Hazret Imam Sahib)
- Chagatai – Uzbeks w/o tribal affiliation
- Tamerlane & Samarakand
- Feudal society dominated by landlords

The Uzbeks are the largest of the Altaic groups. The Uzbeks are thought to have introduced the famous game of *buzkashi*, a kind of polo in which teams of horsemen try to capture the headless carcass of a calf or goat and carry it across a goal line. The Turkmens are known across the world as master rug weavers and brought the rug weaving industry into Afghanistan. They also introduced the qarakul sheep, whose pelts are highly valued and constitute a successful Afghan export. About 1 million Uzbeks live as sedentary farmers in northern Afghanistan across the Amu Darya from Uzbekistan. Most Uzbeks are Sunni Muslims and have mingled many traditional beliefs with their Islamic practices. Although they are generally not orthodox Muslims, Islam is an integral part of their cultural identity. Uzbek men usually wear somber colors, except for the bright color sash which older men use to close their long quilted coats. Nearly all wear the *doppa*, a black, four-sided skullcap embroidered in white. Uzbek women are fond of dresses in sparkly cloth, often worn as a knee-length gown with trousers of the same material underneath. One or two braids indicate a married woman, more braids signify a single woman. Eyebrows that grow together are considered attractive and are often supplemented with pencil for the right effect. Uzbeks are also predominantly farmers and herders, but many live in towns as craftsmen and artisans working as silversmiths, goldsmiths, leatherworkers, and rug makers. Some Uzbeks refer to themselves by old tribal names while others identify themselves by the village they are from. The social structure is patriarchal and Uzbek villages are led by *begs* or *khans*. The Uzbeks enjoyed a brief period of dominance when Tamerlane conquered much of Central Asia and ruled from Samarakand.

Other Ethnic Groups

- Farsiwan
- Qizilbash
- Aimaqs
- Moghols
- Baluchis
- Brahuis
- Hindus
- Guiars
- Turkomen

Other Ethnic Groups

There are a number of other ethnic groups living in small pockets in Afghanistan. The *Farsiwan* (also called Parsiwan or Parsiban), are farmers who live near the Iranian border, although some have moved east to the larger towns of Herat, Kandahar, and Ghazni. The Farsiwan, who number about half a million, are ethnically and linguistically indistinguishable from the Iranians across the border.

Other Dari-speaking ethnic groups in Afghanistan include the *Qizilbash*, well-educated urban Afghans descended from the military and administrative personnel left behind by one of the rulers who briefly conquered some of the Pashtun tribal areas in the 18th century. The *Aimaqs* are another Persian-central Asian group, as are the *Moghols* who are scattered through central and north Afghanistan.

The *Beluchis*, who speak an Iranian language and live in the southwestern part of the country as well as in adjoining areas of Pakistan. The *Brahuis*, *Hindus*, and *Gujars*, who originated on the Indian subcontinent.

Cross Culture Communication

- Greetings
 - A smile, nod, and greeting
 - Same sex kissing is common
 - Hand shakes
 - Soft and gentle
 - May place hand on heart
 - Wait for the individual to initiate
 - Small comfort zone when talking

Greetings. A smile, a nod, and a word of greeting are appropriate ways of greeting an Afghan in most situations. Embracing or kissing on both cheeks is also a common form of greeting between people of the same sex.

The handshake is also customary in Afghanistan when arriving and leaving. Handshakes between men are soft and gentle, not a test of strength. They are not firm, but neither are they weak. Some Afghans may place their right hands over their hearts after shaking hands. This gesture simply means that the handshake is from the heart. Should an Afghan make this gesture, it is appropriate and expected that the receiver reciprocate.

When uncertain as to how to greet an Afghan, it is prudent to wait until the other person extends his or her hand before making the same gesture. Whatever the situation, one should not attempt to initiate a handshake with a woman. Should a woman initiate a handshake, she will use only the tips of her fingers and will not touch palms.

Afghans typically stand closer to other people during conversation than most westerners do. When observing an American in conversation with an Afghan, it is common to see the American move away as the Afghan inches closer. This continual shifting may go unnoticed by the individuals, but can still lead to each feeling uncomfortable with the encounter.

Cross Culture Communication

■ Gestures, Mannerisms, & Taboos

- Thumbs-up and OK
- Feet
- Heads
- The Left Hand
- Shame
- Animals
- Profanity
- Others

Remember: Afghans are not Arabs!

Afghans are liberal with hand gestures and facial expressions during discussions. The sooner westerners can acquaint themselves with some of the gestures, mannerisms, and taboos of the region, the less likely negative social situations will arise.

Thumbs Up and OK

The thumbs-up gesture traditionally is an offensive Muslim insult. It is equivalent to using the middle finger in the western world. Some more media savvy Afghans may understand the western meaning of an upturned thumb and intend for the gesture to mean just that. Other Afghans may use the gesture in its traditional sense.

Feet and Heads

Big blunders can arise if Westerners are unaware of the significance of the head and the feet in a Muslim culture.

When in the presence of Muslims, be careful not to raise or cross your legs in such a way that the sole of the foot faces others in the room. Such an action is considered unclean and is perceived as one of the greatest of insults. It is important to be aware of how the bottoms of your feet are pointed whenever you are in a room with others. Never let the sole of your foot or shoe come in contact with an Afghan person.

Be aware that forcing a Muslim's head to touch the ground may make him an enemy. Muslims only touch their heads to the ground when praying.

Use of The Left Hand

In Afghanistan, and throughout the Muslim world, Afghans use the right hand exclusively for all public functions. These functions include shaking hands, eating, drinking, and passing something to another person. Using the left hand is an insult and, if done in the presence of many others, could bring shame to an Afghan.

In the Muslim world, the left hand serves a specific purpose – hygiene after using the toilet. Afghans will cleanse their hands immediately after. In fact, many consider the Western practice of using paper to be offensive, and question how paper can make one sufficiently clean. Some historians believe this may be the reason hand shaking is done with the right hand.

Shame and Afghan Culture

■ Notes Continue

Bringing shame upon a Muslim can have dangerous, and sometimes deadly, consequences. It is important to understand actions that can shame a Muslim and to avoid those actions wherever possible. For example, correcting an Afghan in public can shame an Afghan, as can using the left-hand to hand something to an Afghan.

To a traditional Afghan man, his household and family are very private matters, not to be discussed in casual conversation and not a matter for public concern. Inquiring as to the name or well being of an Afghan man's wife can bring shame to the man. Most of the customs having to do with women come from this attitude. The women in a man's family are part of his household, and his privacy and honor are violated if they are accosted or insulted by other men. Also, forceful entry into a household also carries with it indignity and a threat to the Afghan man's honor.

Shame, in this culture, is something to be avoided. But if it happens, the first response may be to hide it from view. If this is not possible, then the shame must be avenged. The Qur'an states that revenge is the only way to eliminate a shame.

Animals

Like other Muslims, most Afghans consider dogs unclean and will be very reluctant to touch one. Those Afghans who have anything to do with raising animals may have guard dogs for their flocks, but even so, are not accustomed to the notion of dogs in the house. An Afghan who has touched a dog will want to wash his or her hands, either immediately afterwards or most certainly before eating. Muslims do, however, like cats. Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was once said to have cut off the hem of his robe rather than disturb the cat sleeping on it.

Avoiding Profanity and Derogatory Terms

Wherever possibly, avoidance of profanity in the presence of Afghans is recommended. Many Muslim people can be sensitive to bad language. Further, it is essential to avoid any references that Afghans may find derogatory. Also, remember that the Afghan people are not part of the Middle East, nor do they consider themselves Arabs. It is their shared Islamic religion which accounts for many of the similarities in culture between Afghanistan and other countries that are considered Arab.

Other Things to Avoid

While Afghans may engage in discussions relating to religion and politics, these subjects can be provocative. To avoid conflict, it would be best to avoid such topics.

■ Notes Continue

Male westerners should not show any interest or affection toward Afghan women. Further, westerners should avoid photographing or staring at Afghan women. Public affection toward someone of the opposite sex, even a simple touching of the hands, should be avoided. Such behavior is considered unacceptable in Muslim societies.

When possible, avoid pointing a finger at objects or at a person to whom you wish to speak. A pointed finger sends the message that the person pointed to is no better than an animal.

Time in Afghanistan is not measured as strictly as time in Western countries. Rushing or aggressively hurrying an Afghan is not productive and usually a waste of energy.

At all times, it is important to be honest when interacting with the Afghan people. Try to avoid blunt refusals when asked to perform a favor for an Afghan. Such refusals are considered rude or impolite. A response that suggests that an effort will be made ("I'll see what I can do.") is usually more appropriate.

Cross Culture Communication

■ Hospitality

- A cherished tradition
- Being unwelcome is disrespect
- Will provide their best
- Gender segregation
- May perceive Americans as anti-social

In Afghanistan, as in the rest of the wider Islamic World, hospitality is a cherished tradition. An Afghan's good reputation is, in part, related to the generosity he shows towards visitors to his home. Being perceived as unwelcoming can be a serious affront to an Afghan's character.

Westerners who have lived in an Islamic country for any length of time have likely had many experiences of hospitality extended freely by their Muslim friends, without any expectation of return.

Even the poorest Afghan families who can hardly feed themselves go to any length to make a visitor feel welcome and valued. The best foods are offered in large quantities. The experience would be shared with much fellowship, laughter, and affection. If an Afghan acquaintance expresses a wish to entertain, or to invite an American to tea, the men will socialize with the men, and the women will socialize with the women. Separate-sex entertaining is the norm.

Muslims can become puzzled at American customs involving the necessity of invitations and giving notice before visiting another's home. An Afghan family in America might issue a general invitation, not realizing that they must pin down a specific time and place, leaving them to wonder why Americans are so unsociable.

Cross Culture Communication

- Business
 - Prefer to know someone before making commitment
 - Tea first
 - Multiple attendees
 - Mood dictates pace
 - Allow time for prayer

Do not expect to open conversation on an important topic immediately upon being introduced. Afghans follow a pattern of etiquette where there is first a cup of tea, and then some pleasant conversation - conversation in which little or no mention is made of business to be discussed. If you are in a meeting, do not be surprised if you find several people attending or simply gathering around. Generally speaking, the Afghan people prefer to get to know the new person before entering into full conversation that may lead to commitments. This may very well take time - you will find the true pace of action to be that of doing things "slowly, slowly." The passing of time indeed varies according to the mood of the moment.

Also, remember that time must often be allowed for prayer - five times a day for the devout Muslim - which may interrupt a scheduled course of action.

Training and Doctrine Command

Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations, and Training



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